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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 001623

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: EU REACTION TO POTENTIAL POSITIVE STEPS FOR BELARUS

REF: A) STATE 82809 B) MINSK 476

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Kyle Scott. Reason: 1.4 (B)  
(D)

1. (C) Mission passed ref a points April 15 to Carl Hartzell, East Europe and Caucasus specialist of the Council's Policy Unit. Hartzell reviewed them briefly, and said they seemed reasonable, and in fact went further than the EU was thinking at this time. The EU was also looking at steps to increase dialogue in response to positive steps by Belarus, but would likely limit them to expert meetings and perhaps a Political Director troika at most.

2. (C) Hartzell said the Council had held a review of its policy toward Belarus following the US-EU joint demarche to confirm that there was no need to change their policy. This was a tactical decision, since it was possible that enlargement could lead to pressures by countries bordering on Belarus to adjust the policy. The review, however, had reconfirmed the EU's current approach, adopted originally in 1997. He said the Council was looking at ways that EU funds could be used to help civil society, but admitted that EU mechanisms (such as TISIS funding) were not very nimble for this purpose, as they required approval by the government.

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